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ABSTRACT

Identity development has been conceptualized as a process with four possible outcomes or identity statuses: Achievement, Moratorium, Foreclosure, and Diffusion. If males placed a high value on an identity crisis, women who identified with the male sex role would be expected to be in a crisis (Moratorium) or post-crisis (Achievement) status. However, research has shown that commitment to an identity (Achievement and Foreclosure) is more predictive of female behavior than the existence of the identity crisis. To determine whether the presence of a crisis or the presence of commitment was associated with high psychological masculinity in women, 88 undergraduate women were administered an ego identity status inverview, a psychological masculinity scale, and a psychological femininity scale. Significant differences were found on psychological masculinity for each ego identity statuses. Women committed to occupational, ideological, and sexual value aspects of identity (Achievement and Foreclosure) were higher in psychological masculinity than uncommitted women (Moratorium and Diffusion). No differences were found on psychological femininity. (Author/NRB)

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IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND SEX ROLE SELF-CONCEPT IN YOUNG WOMEN

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IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND SEX-ROLE SELF-CONCEPT
IN YOUNG WOMEN

Identity development has been conceptualized as a process with four possible outcomes, or identity statuses (Marcia, 1966; 1967; Marcia and Friedman, 1970; Schenkel and Marcia, 1972). Presence or absence of two major components of the identity development process are used to define to four statuses; these components are 1)crisis, a questioning or challenging period, and 2)commitment to a set of personal goals and values. The four identity statuses are: 1) Achievement--the person has been through a crisis period and made ensuing commitments; 2) Moratorium--the person is actively engaged in a crisis with vague commitments only; 3) Foreclosure--strong commitments have been made without having been through a crisis period; 4) Diffusion--the person is neither actively involved in a crisis nor making strong commitments.

It was suggested that cultural sex role expectations for men, more than for women, emphasized the value of an identity crisis and subsequent commitment to an identity. (Hodgson, 1977 Marcia & Friedman, 1970; Prager, 1980; Schenkel, 1974; Schenkel & Marcia, 1972). If it were true that the male sex role placed a higher value on an identity crisis, one would expect that women who identified more closely with the male sex role (or less closely with the feminine sex role) would be more likely to be found in the crisis status of Moratorium, or the post-crisis status of Achievement. Specifically, the current study investigated whether women who have incorporated for themselves some of the cultural expectations for men in the form of psychologically masculine traits would be more likely to engage in an

identity crisis. Psychological masculinity includes characteristics such as assertive, independent, not easily influenced, tough-minded, and rational. Theoretically, these qualities are integral to the crisis aspect of identity development; because crisis requires, for example, the independence to break away from one's "roots", and to question previous goals and values (Marcia, 1966).

On the other hand, it has also been shown that commitment to an identity (Achievement and Foreclosure vs. Moratorium and Diffusion) is actually more predictive of behavior in women than presence or absence of the identity crisis. (Prager, 1980; Schenkel, 1974; Schenkel & Marcia, 1972; Toder and Marcia, 1973) Psychologically masculine traits could also be integral to commitment as well as to crisis, since commitment involves taking a stand (outspokenness) (Marcia, 1966; Erikson, 1968) and resistance to conformity pressure (tough-mindedness) (Toder and Marcia, 1973). Therefore, the current work investigated whether the presence of a crisis (Achievement and Moratorium vs. Foreclosure and Diffusion) or the presence of commitment (Achievement and Foreclosure vs. Moratorium and Diffusion) would be associated with high psychological masculinity in women.

Psychological femininity, the extent to which an individual incorporates traditionally feminine traits into her self-concept, has been conceptualized as a separate dimension from psychological masculinity, free to vary independently. Therefore, it was expected in the current study that separate hypotheses could be made regarding identity development and psychological masculinity, and identity development and psychological femininity.

Psychological femininity, which includes characteristics such as grateful, compassionate, gentle, and considerate, has been viewed as an interpersonal self-concept dimension (Hodgson, 1977), as communion rather than agency (Bakan, 1966), or as expressive, rather than instrumental behavior (Parsons and Bales, 1965). Although early writers (Deutsch, 1944; Freud, 1933) saw this interpersonal self-concept (femininity) as the totality of a woman's identity, later theorists (Erikson, 1968) have defined identity as intrapersonal in nature for both sexes (Hodgson, 1977). With the current intrapersonal definition of identity (Erikson, 1968), it seemed plausible that psychological femininity, an interpersonal dimension, would not be relevant to a woman in her identity development. Therefore, it was expected that there would be no differences among the women in the 4 identity status groups on psychological femininity.

METHOD

SUBJECTS

The subjects were 88 undergraduate women recruited from classes at a large southwestern university, who were paid for 2 hours of time.

INSTRUMENTS

Identity status was determined by a 20 to 30 minute semi-structured interview. The interviewer evaluated the presence or absence of crisis and commitment in four areas: occupation, religion, politics, and sexual values. From the interview responses, each subject was classified as one of 4 statuses: Achievement, Moratorium, Foreclosure, and Diffusion (as defined above). The method and scoring manual used by Marcia (1966) were used unchanged, with the addition of the sexual

values questions found to be relevant in later work with women (Schenkel and Marcia, 1972). Reliability of identity status classification was determined by having 20 interview tapes rated by two separate interviewers; agreement between interviewers on subjects' identity status classification was 82%.

The Personal Attributes Questionnaire (P.A.Q.) was used to assess sex-role self-concept(Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp, 1974). The P.A.Q. consists of fifty-five five-point bipolar adjective scales. The items were chosen and divided into three scales on the basis of two separate ratings by college students: 1) whether the opposite poles of the items were differentially sex-stereotyped, and 2) which pole of the pair (masculine or feminine) was rated as the ideal. The ratings resulted in three subscales: 1) the male-valued scale (M-scale), twenty-three items in which ratings of the ideal male and the ideal female fell on the male-stereotyped pole of the item scales; 2) the female-valued scale (F-scale), eighteen items in which ratings of the ideal male and ideal female fell on the female-stereotyped pole of the item scale; and 3) a sex-specific, or masculine-feminine scale (M-F scale); thirteen items in which the ideal male and the ideal female fell on opposite, sex-appropriate poles of the bipolar item scales. The latter scale was not used in the current study.

Subjects were asked to describe themselves using the P.A.Q. bipolar items. Each subject received three scores, one for each subscale. The M-scale is scored in the masculine-stereotyped ideal direction, so that high scores indicate a person describing himself in

a desirable, masculine way. The F-scale is scored in the female-stereotyped, ideal direction, so that high scores indicate a person describing herself in a desirable, feminine way. The subscale scores vary independently, so that a subject could get high scores on both.

PROCEDURE

Subjects came at the appointed time to a waiting room and filled out the following questionnaires: a packet including a demographic information form, the P.A.Q., and other personality assessment forms described elsewhere (Prager, 1980). This part of the procedure took from 15-30 minutes, and was followed by the identity status interview, which lasted 30 minutes.

RESULTS

A clear result of the present study was that women in the 4 different identity status groups showed significant differences in psychological masculinity ($F = 7.24$, $df = 3.84$, $p < .001$).(Table 1). Comparisons were made, using Duncan's Multiple Range Procedure, and showed that, committed identity women (Achievement and Foreclosure women were higher in masculinity than uncommitted women (Moratorium and Diffusion) ($p < .05$).

As predicted, no differences were found among the women in the 4 groups on psychological femininity (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis of significant differences among the women in the 4 identity status groups on psychological masculinity was confirmed. The pattern of results showed women in the committed identity status

groups (Achievement and Foreclosure) to be significantly higher in psychological masculinity than the women in the uncommitted status groups (Moratorium and Diffusion). The woman with the committed identity, then, is most likely to have incorporated traditionally masculine traits into her self-concept, whether her commitment followed a crisis or not.

One possible explanation for the association of identity commitment and psychological masculinity is that, given that commitment to an identity has been shown to be associated with other indications of positive adjustment in women, such as resistance to conformity pressure, and comfort with that resistance (Toder and Marcia, 1973), self-esteem (Prager, 1980; Schenkel and Marcia, 1972), and lower anxiety (Marcia and Friedman, 1970), high psychological masculinity may reflect the positive adjustment in women which goes along with commitment to an identity. Indeed, there is research which indicates that psychological masculinity, (often along with psychological femininity, i.e. psychological androgyny) is associated with positive adjustment in women. (Kenworthy, 1979; Prager, 1980; Schiff and Koopman, 1978).

A second possibility is that the uncommitted women (Moratorium and Diffusion) are remaining uncommitted for a reason: to keep their values and goals flexible enough to fit into the plans of the future husband. This somewhat deliberate flexibility has been characterized as central to female socialization (Bardwick and Douvan, 1972). If the uncommitted women are holding back on identity commitment to remain flexile for a husband, the data suggest that these flexible

women are not higher in femininity, but rather are women who have not incorporated culturally valued masculine qualities into their self-concepts.

Given that psychological masculinity is an agency, or instrumentality, dimension (Bakan, 1966, Parsons and Bales, 1955), a third explanation is that perhaps this quality of instrumentality is incompatible with being in the throes of uncertainty about one's identity. Moratorium, in particular, is a time of reflecting (Waterman and Waterman, 1974) rather than of action. Uncertainty is also traditionally incompatible with the masculine individual, who is stereotypically "sure and strong". (Spence, Helmreich and Stapp, 1975). The uncommitted women may feel this incomptability within themselves.

Finally, the current work suggests that, however a woman develops her identity, it is clear that her psychological femininity is not affected by (nor does it seriously affect) the outcome. Psychological femininity may be a purely interpersonal dimension, irrelevant to women in defining themselves as individuals outside of their traditional roles.

TABLE I

Mean Psychological Masculinity Scores for Women in the Four Identity Statuses

	$\bar{X}$	SD	N
Achievement	84.97	8.02	29
Moratorium	74.53	11.79	15
Foreclosure	85.94	8.61	17
Diffusion	78.70	7.18	27
Total	81.45	9.53	88

$F=7.24$ $D.F.=3.84$ $P < .001$

Mean Comparisons with $P < .05$

A > M
A > D
F > M
F > D

A+F > M+D

TABLE II

Mean Psychological Femininity for Women in the Four Identity

	$\bar{X}$	SD
Achievement	69.55	8.86
Moratorium	68.93	6.22
Foreclosure	73.59	5.35
Diffusion	70.41	5.73
Total	70.49	7.01

F=N.S.

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